

The Light We Carry*

(A Reflection on Candlemas)

Before electricity blessed our lives, the church traditionally held the 40th day after Christmas (2nd February) as a day to bless candles for the coming year, hence the name 'Candlemas'. The blessing accompanied the reading from Luke (2.22-40) about two elderly people (Simeon and Anna) who saw and recognised the infant Jesus as God's 'Light to the world'.



'My eyes have seen your salvation...a Light to reveal you to the world...'

It seems that we are never too old to see the Light! The light of Christ blessed both Simeon and Anna at the very end of their lives. And by their light, others were also seen.

Christ is the Light of the world – and the Godly light within us – affirmed at our baptism. It is our responsibility to bless and protect that light. For this is the light by which we see ourselves most clearly. It is the Light which lightens the terrain around us, and in which we can navigate our way safely through the uncertainties and challenges of life. It is the light by which God shows us the world beyond ourselves and our imagined limitations.

The light we carry* can also be used '**to make others feel seen**'. This idea is picked up by Michelle Obama in her latest book by the same title*. The book is easy to read and offers simple strategies to keep our inner light alive through the storms of life and as a beacon for others. She writes, "When we are able to recognise our own light, we become empowered to use it". The light we carry can shine beyond us and into shadowy places, where people may feel lost and unnoticed: it can help them feel 'seen' and valued. The light we carry is 'a lamp to our feet and a light to our path' (*Psalms 119.105*).

Bernadette Farrell expresses it well through the verses of her hymn: 'Longing for Light...'

Christ be our Light!

Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness.

Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Candlemas reminds us, as we journey on towards Lent and Easter, that we carry the Christ-light within us. Maybe, as members of Mothers Union, this is a season when we can **let our inner light shine brightly enough to make others feel seen and valued**.